

# The Lamp



## United States Association of Consecrated Virgins

September 21, 2007  
St. Matthew, Apostle & Evangelist

TO THE MEMBERS OF THE UNITED STATES ASSOCIATION OF CONSECRATED VIRGINS:

Volume 12, Issue 5

September 21, 2007 Feast of Saint Matthew, Apostle and Evangelist

Dear Sisters in Christ,

The celebration of the feast of an apostle is always a source of particular joy for those consecrated to the life of virginity lived in the world. Even as the holy women accompanied our Lord and the Apostles throughout our Lord's public ministry and even as the Virgin Mary stood at the foot of the Cross with John the Apostle, so consecrated virgins are united to those called to exercise the apostolic ministry by a particular bond of grace and love. In his book, *Jesus of Nazareth*, Pope Benedict XVI considers the distinct call and gift of the holy women, commenting: "Yet Luke makes clear – and the other Gospels also show this in all sorts of ways – that 'many' women belonged to the more intimate community of believers and that their faith-filled following of Jesus was an essential element of that community, as would be vividly illustrated at the foot of the Cross and at the Resurrection" (p. 181).

Celebrating the Feast of Saint Matthew, Apostle and Evangelist, you whom God has called to consecrated virginity lived in the world are reminded of the maternal love with which you are to love all the members of the Body of Christ, your Bridegroom, to Whom you are espoused forever. Your total and devoted love of the Church is a most special source of encouragement and strength for the shepherds of the flock who bear a heavy burden of responsibility to guide the flock in the way of truth, to feed the flock with the Heavenly Bread of the Eucharist and with the spiritual food of the prayer and devotion flowing from participation in the Holy Eucharist, and to protect the flock from the enemies of our Lord. By your prayer for the Bishop, a true successor of the Apostles, and by your concern that you be a consolation and encouragement to him, you give essential expression to your spousal love of our Lord, in whose person the Bishop, as Head and Shepherd of the flock, acts.

The figure of Saint Matthew provides a distinctive reminder of our need to pray for the conversion of sinners and to trust in the power of God's grace to transform even the most sinful of lives. In his catecheses on the Apostles, recently published in his book, *Jesus, the Apostles, and the Early Church*, Pope Benedict XVI invites us, in his reflection on Saint Matthew, to consider the truth that "Jesus does not exclude anyone from his friendship" (p. 82). He also leads us to consider how "those who seem to be the farthest from holiness can even become a model of the acceptance of God's mercy and offer a glimpse of its marvelous effects in their own lives" (p. 83). In Saint Matthew, we see, in a most inspiring manner, how God first loves us and then inspires and strengthens us, through the sevenfold gift of the Holy Spirit, to love Him and others in the same way, with pure and selfless love.

May your celebration of the Feast of Saint Matthew deepen your love of Christ and His Mystical Body. May it strengthen your bond of love with the successors of the Apostles, the Bishops in communion with the Roman Pontiff, the Successor of Saint Peter. Thus, may you be a source of particular consolation and encouragement for those called to shepherd God's flock in the person of Christ the Good Shepherd.

Invoking God's blessing upon you and your consecration, and asking a continued remembrance in your prayers, I remain

Yours in the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary,

*Raymond L. Burke*

(Most Rev.) Raymond L. Burke

Archbishop of Saint Louis

Episcopal Moderator of the United States Association of Consecrated Virgins

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## The Essence of the Consecrated Virgin's Mystical Espousal to Christ

By Diane Christine Farr

*Each consecrated virgin has experienced a unique personal journey on the road to consecration. Some of us have known from a very early age that we were called to give ourselves totally to Christ in this holy state of virginity. Others have taken longer to carefully discern this special call. It is important for all of us to know that God through His grace wishes to enable us to grow in our appreciation and understanding of our beautiful vocation. The richness of God's wisdom to be revealed in the depths of our souls is endless.*

*The desire to remain a virgin because of one's love for Christ goes far beyond a resolve to remain chaste. It is the firm conviction that one has found perfect fulfillment and happiness in belonging entirely in body and soul to Christ. It is the delicate beauty of lasting virginity that has been touched by the presence of our beloved Jesus. This is why physical virginity is required for one to receive the consecration. Our virginal state is a special dimension of our communion with Christ our Bridegroom. There is a mystical element to this life for which we have been consecrated. It is made known and perceived intuitively in the attentive silence of contemplative prayer. We would do well to maintain a sense of wonder as we ponder this beautiful way in which we are called to glorify God.*

*Virginity when it is freely chosen and consecrated is elevated and invested with a divine beauty. We are reminded of how Saint Catherine of Siena was shown the beauty of a soul in the state of sanctifying grace. Each consecrated virgin when she is faithful to God's grace becomes as it were a splendid jewel adorning the Church. Coming to an appreciation for the beauty and worth of the individual person enables us to see more clearly that we are being molded and prepared for our eternal existence with God in his heavenly kingdom. Our entire perspective and outlook would be brought into focus, if each Christian understood how our present life affects our eternal destiny. The consecrated virgin should be a light to the entire Church, and by the good example and testimony of her life she will draw others to live their faith more deeply.*

*In the rite of consecration the bishop asks, "Are you so resolved to follow Christ in the spirit of the gospel that your whole life may be a faithful witness to God's love and a convincing sign of the kingdom of heaven?" In order that she might accomplish this the consecrated virgin must have a strong sense of her own identity as a virgin bride of Christ. She must enter evermore deeply into the mystery of holy virginal purity, which she sees mirrored for her in the life of Our Blessed Lady. She strives always to bring the purity of her soul to Jesus as she receives him in the banquet of his love. This purity is very pleasing to our Lord who is himself the source and summit of all virginal beauty.*

*The consecrated virgin, with humble gratitude, rejoices to be honored with the grace of keeping perpetual virginity centered in Christ. This noble dignity along with a profound union with God is the essence of her mystical betrothal to Christ. This distinguishes consecrated virginity from other forms of consecrated life. It is in and through her virginity that the consecrated virgin meets her Bridegroom and experiences His pure embrace. He cherishes her virginal love, and her whole existence is centered in His Divine Being. Preserving the integrity of one's virginity solely for Christ is seen as an everlasting gift, a sign of our eternal union with God in heaven. The consecrated virgin lives this gift at every level of her being, always striving to be pleasing to her Spouse in all things.*

*In the prayer of consecration referring to Christ it says, "Be yourself their glory, their joy, their whole desire." One who has heeded his call can surely testify that Christ himself is the glory of virginity and the joy and desire of all virginal hearts. Only with great simplicity of heart can we penetrate the depths of this mystery of virginal love, which is ours. It is our hidden treasure and our pearl of great price. When Christ places the seal of His love upon our virginity we can no longer see it apart from him. Remembering that He is jealous of our hearts we maintain a certain reserve and modesty in our whole demeanor.*

*The consecrated virgin lives in the world, but she is not of the world. This is why she sees her virginity in a vastly different way than a woman called to the sacrament of marriage. So also is the virgin's mystical espousal to Christ uniquely different from a marriage between a man and a woman.*

*Instead of a marriage between equals this holy union is between a creature and her Creator. The finite creation enveloped by infinite love. There is a deeper mutual self-giving as God may freely communicate himself to the attentive soul. The bride in turn is perfectly known and comprehended by her Beloved. Thus a higher more perfect union is achieved. Virginity itself becomes the enduring and radiant sign of our eternal marriage with the Lamb. The consecrated virgin may be compared to a splendid white lily which in this life begins to open its petals to the Divine Son only to be transplanted one day to the heavenly garden of the Holy Trinity. We use many images and concepts to describe an ineffable reality that is beyond all words.*

*continued on page 5*

## Council News

### Current council members and officers are:

**Judith M. Stegman, President,** 2007 – 2009; Diocese of Lansing

**Magalis Aguilera, ;** 2007 – 2009 (appointed **Vice-President** thru 2009); Archdiocese of Miami

**Louise Pare, Treasurer,** 2005 – 2007; Diocese of Lansing

**Shalina Stilley,** 2005 – 2007; Archdiocese of Milwaukee

**Aliceanne Sawyer,** 2006 – 2008 (appointed **Secretary** thru 2008); Diocese of Trenton.

### *from the President's journal . . .*

*This issue of The Lamp, from beginning to end, presents riches offered to spouses of the Eternal Bridegroom, invoking from us a deeper 'yes' expressed in love for Him and His Church. Archbishop Burke's words reminding us of "the maternal love with which you are to love all the members of the Body of Christ, your Bridegroom, to Whom you are espoused forever" are echoed in the column on our 2007 convocation, in the words of Diane Farr, in the homily from the death of an Italian sister of ours, and in the active planning of our Rome 2008 meeting. And I am saving for next time related exhortations to consecrated virgins from the Church Fathers - profound words that Magalis sent me for the "Something Ancient, Something New" column that didn't make it to this issue.*

*My time these days has been spent working on plans for the 2008 International Congress-Pilgrimage to Rome, working on the development of new teams, and planning for the completion, promotion, and distribution of our Vocations Tree project. I surely count on your prayers for the success of these endeavors, for the glory of God in the building up of His Church.*

*-Judith Stegman*

### Messages from Team Leaders

Barbara Swieciak is the team leader for our newly formed "[Candidate Care Team](#)", a team formed to offer assistance to candidates in the practical aspects of preparing for the celebration of the Rite of Consecration. Barbara writes: The Candidate Care Team will provide candidates for consecration with actual samples to assist them in their final preparations. The team is asking consecrated virgins for 2-3 copies of invitations, inserts in invitations, programs, prayer cards or any other memorabilia from your consecration that you would like to share. These will be assembled and made available to the candidates. Please send your items to: Barbara Swieciak 149 South 24th Street, La Crosse, Wisconsin 54601

[2009 Convocation Team:](#) Please contact [Judith Stegman](#) if you are interested in working on this team. It will be important as we begin in 2009 a new pattern of holding the national convocations in late June.

[Recordings Team:](#) [Magalis Aguilera](#) announces that she is hard at work filling orders for CD's and audiotapes from the 2007 Convocation and the 2007 Information Conference. Order forms are enclosed or attached with this issue of *The Lamp*..

### Upcoming events:

**International Congress-Pilgrimage of Consecrated Virgins to Rome, May 14 to 20, 2008.** [See update article!](#)

### National Convocations of United States Consecrated Virgins

June 24 to June 28, 2009 St. Louis area

June 23 to June 27, 2010

### National Information Conferences

August 6 to August 8, 2008 Chicago

August 5 to 7, 2009 Chicago

August 4 to 6, 2010 Chicago

**THANK YOU** to [Aliceanne Sawyer](#) for providing each convocation participant with an artfully crafted CD of photographs from the convocation.

These will bring back memories for many days.

**Note from Mary Kantor...** *Mary writes that she will continue to accept surveys for her doctoral research through December 2007, so there is still time for you to complete and mail in your survey. She also invites newly consecrated virgins to contact her if you want to participate and haven't yet received a survey. E-mail [info@consecratedvirgins.org](mailto:info@consecratedvirgins.org) if you're interested.*

# Rome 2008 Update

## Rome 2008 International Congress-Pilgrimage -& Shrines of Italy Pilgrimage update from Isabel Bettwy

May 12 - 21, 2008 are the dates for the international gathering of consecrated virgins in Rome. If you haven't registered yet, you may still do so, but as soon as possible. We have been requested to send our "final" report to the organizers by October 15. So, the final date for registration for the Congress-Pilgrimage for the US consecrated virgins has to be October 12. After October 15 the organizers reserve the right not to accept additional registrations. The organizers are eager to know the number who will be participating so that they can finalize plans, especially the hotel assignments. If you need a registration form, contact me by E-mail (imabettwy@aol.com) or phone (740-282-1683) and I will send you one.

Just a reminder: **the second installment of all fees for the Congress is due by October 12. Please include the green sheet (sent with the confirmation of your registration) with your October payment. If you have paid in full, please send the green sheet to me by October 12.**

Please also be in contact with me if you have travel uncertainties, such as serious health concerns, so that we may consider what might be arranged.

Regarding housing: Double occupancy are the only rooms included in the Congress pricing. If you have not designated a roommate, it will be necessary to assign another consecrated virgin to be your roommate unless you let us know whom you want to share a room with.

Several of our sisters have established a fund to assist other consecrated virgins who may be a bit short on the funds needed for the Congress-Pilgrimage. If you find yourself in that kind of a situation, please do not hesitate to contact me. Your request will be kept confidential, as are those who have created the fund. We don't want anyone who believes she should be participating not to be able to do so because of finances.

We also invite consecrated virgins who may not be attending the Pilgrimage to consider donating to assist others to attend. A number of generous contributions have been received, but need still exists among U.S. consecrated virgins. If we collect more than is needed for our U.S. sisters, we will also offer assistance to those from other countries.

Following the international gathering we have scheduled a **pilgrimage for English speaking consecrated virgins to various shrines in Italy**. The dates are **May 21 - 27, 2008**. You will already be in Italy for the Congress and so the additional cost is only \$1505. You may access complete information about this pilgrimage online at [www.pilgrimages.com/consecrated](http://www.pilgrimages.com/consecrated). Here, too, it's not too late to register for this chance of a lifetime pilgrimage with your sisters in the Lord. If you thought that you would not be able to make this after-pilgrimage, and now find it possible to do so, just register and let me know so that we can adjust your airfare deposit. Registrations for the Shrines of Italy pilgrimage can be made up to sixty days before we depart for Rome, or March 12, when full payment is required.

The Shrines of Italy pilgrimage, including airfare to and from Italy, may be put on a credit card, but the Congress-Pilgrimage must be paid for by check.

To date we have 20 women from the US, one from El Salvador and one from Denmark who have registered through us for the international gathering. Please pray that the way will open for many more to participate in the international gathering and also in the Shrines of Italy pilgrimage, for which we need a few more people. Joined together in prayer, let us pray for one another that we may each know God's will for us.

Let us also keep Judith Stegman in our prayers. She will be traveling to Rome in October to help finalize the plans for the Congress-Pilgrimage. It's a gigantic task to put together an event of this magnitude which involves so many countries and individuals. **With the Lord, all things are possible.**

## Consecrations

### U.S. consecration announcements.

**Sarah Malick**, 9/8/07, Diocese of Lansing, Most Rev. Carl F. Mengeling

**Eileen Belongea**, 9/8/07, Archdiocese of Milwaukee, Most Rev Timothy Dolan

#### Upcoming:

**Rosie Capalad**, 9/29/07, Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston, Most Rev. Daniel N. DiNardo

**Donna Huddell**, 10/21/07, Archdiocese of Philadelphia, during the 10:30 Mass in her home parish of St. John the evangelist church, Most Rev. Robert Maginnis. She welcomes anyone who would like to attend!

**Karen Webb**, 11/18/07, Diocese of Rochester, Most Rev. Matthew H. Clark



### Other Countries:

**Great Britain:** **Renata Schmidt**, 9/4/07, Hereford

**Argentina:**

**Cristina Mittelmann**, Archdiocese of San Miguel de Tucuman, 09/01/07.

**Laura Flamenco**, 08/12/07, Diocese of San Miguel

Upcoming 11/01/07: **Maria Andrea Green**, 11/01/07, Diocese of Morón

Upcoming 12/12/07: **Ana Maria Mendizabal**, Diocese of Gualequaychu, Mons. Jorge Lozano.

**Australia:** **Teresa Mary Hartley**, 7/22/07, St. Francis Xavier Cathedral Adelaide, Archbishop Philip Wilson

**Canada:** Upcoming 02/05/08, **Caroline Nolan**, Archdiocese of Edmonton

## Elections Fall 2007

**Two Council positions, Treasurer and At-Large Representative, will open January 1, 2008.** We encourage members to consider running for these leadership positions in the Association. Details of our governing structure can be found in the organizational statutes and bylaws of the USACV, which are available upon request. In summary, what you need to know for these elections:

### *Election Process*

Written notification of a member's desire to run for an open Council position must be received by midnight on Saturday, October 27, 2007. We encourage each candidate to also submit a biographical statement, including remarks about why she desires to serve in the position.

Ballots (and candidate biographies) will be mailed to all members in early November 2007. Please note that voting members of the Association are consecrated virgins living under the jurisdiction of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops who have a certificate of consecration on file with the USACV and who are registered as members in 2007. If you have not yet registered as a member in 2007, now would be a good time to do so!

Ballots will be due back by Friday, December 7, 2007. Ballots will be opened and counted in the presence of an independent party. At that time, notification of the results will be made to the President, the newly elected, and all candidates.

Results will be published on our website and will be announced in the following newsletter.

*Please refer to the July 2007 newsletter for a detailed description of the Position Terms, Descriptions and Responsibilities for the two open Council seats.*

### *Please Consider Running for Office*

**Please do consider running for office, and encourage other members to run – sometimes all it takes is a personal word!**

## The Essence *continued . . .*

Canon 604 speaks of virgins being pledged to follow Christ more closely through their consecration. When we strive to strengthen our mystical espousal to Christ we proclaim that we love God for himself alone. The more perfectly we give our virginity to Christ the more perfect the fruitfulness of our spiritual motherhood will be as we serve the Church. If we are to be an effective sign of the Church's wedded love for Christ and the resurrected life of heaven, we must be completely detached from all selfish and petty preoccupations.

The consecrated virgin must devote significant time to prayer and silent contemplation. Only in this way will she come to know the heart of her Divine Spouse in depth. We are completely dependant on the grace of God for it is He who has chosen us rather than us choosing him. It is the work of the Holy Spirit that has drawn our hearts to a higher love that continually guides our interior life. We, totally absorbed in the love of our Divine Spouse, will take on the character and sentiments of His Heart.

We, filled with a genuine and sincere compassion, will be concerned for the welfare and salvation of other people. God will be able to act more freely in and through us as we practice the freedom of perfect detachment from self.

We will be purified through the trials and challenges in our lives, leading us to a firm trust in Divine Providence. We must truly come to know our Divine Spouse so that we will do all things in union with Him rather than alone. This work of sanctification is meant to draw us into a closer union with the Blessed Trinity that dwells within our souls. This life of virginity to which we have been consecrated has a vital role in our sanctification according to the homily for the rite of consecration. We are grateful for this exquisite flower obtained for us through the passion and cross of our Lord and Savior. We know we have received a royal gift that was first bestowed upon the Queen of angels.

The bride of Christ loves virginity for it is the secret gate at which she meets and delights in her Bridegroom. With this in mind let us ponder a closing thought given to us by Abbot Marmion.

“This complete donation of yourself, inspired and realized by the help of grace, is the great subject of your interior joy. It should also be a constant source of thanksgiving. For does it not confer upon you the magnificent faculty of consecrating yourself without impediment to a life of intimate union with God? Does it not place you always in the garden enclosed there to enjoy the gifts and presence of the Bridegroom?”

### Book Recommendations...

From [Katie Gesto](#) on Ralph Martin's [Fulfillment of All Desire](#). This masterpiece is genuinely a work of the Holy Spirit for our times,--particularly for us consecrated virgins. Similar in some aspects to Fr. Dubays book, *Fire Within*, Ralph Martin communicates a burning desire to respond to the Lord's call for union with Himself by intertwining key teachings of the pillars of our faith.

Poignant quotes from Teresa of Avila, John of the Cross, Therese Lisieux, Bernard of Clairvaux, Francis de Sales and Catherine of Siena and other great saints color the 473 pages of this life-changing book, spurring us on toward abandoning our selves completely to God, so to more fervently hope for the greatest goal in this life: to reach such profound unity with the Trinity that we receive the gift of spiritual marriage with our Divine Spouse and thus become one with His love--prepared for the beatific vision of heaven.

This book is a must read for anyone, not only us virgins, who want to pursue holiness with a renewed enthusiasm, clarity and joy.

From [Mary Kantor](#) on John D. Miller's [Beads and Prayers](#), 2007 Burns and Oates, London. A very nicely done book, 250 pages, with a chronology of the development of the Rosary, chapters on the Hail Mary, the Lord's Prayer, the Sign of the Cross, and the rosary in papal documents... to mention a few.

## Reflections... 2007 Convocation: In Love with Christ and His Church by Nicole Bettini

The crispness of fall days is settling in, as we take time to reflect upon the lazy, hazy days of summer that were once upon us. For consecrated virgins and candidates, however, the days are never lazy as we strive to keep our lamps burning brightly as we follow *the lamb wherever he leads*.

This past August 8-12, 2007, the USACV hosted the annual convocation at Our Lady of the Snow Shrine in Belleville, Illinois. The theme of the convocation: *In love with Christ and His Church*, and the activity of the Holy Spirit provided for rich dialogue, reflections and prayer over these summer days.

In this bridal vocation where by God's grace and the gift of faith, we offer the pearl of great price—our very lives to our divine spouse. In His great love, he never fails in return to lavish his brides with beautiful treasures.

In addition to reflections from these days, this edition of the newsletter includes an article by Dianne Farr entitled: *The Essence of the Consecrated Virgin's Mystical Espousal to Christ*. Diane was unable to attend the annual meeting, however the providence of this article references many aspects of the days. Diane wrote: "It is important for all of us to know that God through His grace wishes to enable us to grow in appreciation and understanding of



our beautiful vocation. The richness of God's wisdom to be revealed in the depths of our souls is endless."

The recent time together provided opportunities for study, conversation and prayer. Photo albums and memories were shared by recent consecrated virgins. First time and returning consecrated virgins and/or candidates expressed gratitude to once again have this fruitful time to convene to speak and reflect on the beauty and awe of the vocation and the unique, yet common ways the vocation is lived out as we remain ever closely united to His most Sacred Heart.

We were blessed once again by the generosity of his Excellency, Archbishop Burke. During his talks, he expounded upon our Holy Father's recent post-synodal apostolic exhortation: *Sacramentum Caritatas, The Sacrament of Charity*.

Referencing Pope Benedict XVI in the third of three parts of the exhortation, *The Eucharist is a Sacrament to be Lived*, Archbishop Burke commented that participation in the Holy Eucharist embraces the totality of our lives, particularly in our lives as consecrated virgins.

Archbishop Burke reflected on four points that Pope Benedict XVI made regarding consecrated virginity in paragraph 81 of *Sacramentum caritatis*. He spoke of the witness of consecrated virginity, as it expresses "the Church's exclusive devotion to Christ, whom she accepts as her Bridegroom" and as it is "an objective sign and foreshadowing of the 'wedding-feast of the Lamb'". And he spoke of the relationship of the Eucharist to consecrated virginity, as the vocation "finds inspiration and nourishment for its complete dedication to Christ" and "draws encouragement and strength to be a sign in our times too, of God's gracious and



fruitful love for humanity."

He spoke of the relationship of the consecrated virgin to the Bishop. The virgin's total devotion to Christ is reflected in her devotion to the body of Christ and thus to the Bishop who is in charge of the care of the flock. And, finally, he reminded us to model our lives after the Virgin of Virgins, our blessed Mother who is Queen of heaven and earth.

Archbishop Burke encouraged us to look to Mary, for we see in Mary the truth of our destiny. God has shown in Mary what he desires for all of us.

*"Here I wish to reaffirm the importance of the witness of virginity, precisely in relation to the mystery of the Eucharist.*

*In addition to its priestly celibacy, the Eucharistic mystery also has an intrinsic relationship to consecrated virginity, inasmuch as the latter is an expression of the Church's exclusive devotion to Christ, whom she accepts as her Bridegroom with a radical and fruitful fidelity. In the Eucharist, consecrated virginity finds inspiration and nourishment for its complete dedication to Christ."*

(Pope Benedict XVI,  
*Sacramentum Caritatas*, 81)

## Reflections... 2007 Convocation: In Love with Christ and His Church

We were fortunate once again this year to have Father Ambrose, OSB, from Saint Louis Abbey, with us to celebrate Mass and to present a talk entitled: Mary as the Living Icon of the Church and of Consecrated Virgins. Fr. Ambrose juxtaposed for us in his reflection the joy and sorrow presented in the Fourth Joyful Mystery: *The Presentation*. Simeon said: "A sword will pierce your own soul." At this great joyful occasion, Mary's life is touched by sorrow. Through all mysteries she continues to say: *do whatever he tells you*.

Fr. Ambrose, OSB, commented how he believed the icon of the Annunciation 'got it right,' as the angel kneels before Mary, just as a suitor begging for her hand. How true in our vocation, God invites and waits for our hand.

Barb Swieziak, consecrated virgin from La Crosse, WI, during the convocation shared her reflection on this in relation to our vocation. Just as the icon is a written image of our Lady, the word became flesh. Consecrated virgins are called to the depths of that pondering.

Later that evening we journey to the Cathedral Basilica of Saint Louis, and before the tabernacle in the adoration chapel, two life size, marble angels adorned either side. The reality of the scene led Barb to share further comments of the antiphon from the Rite of



Consecration: *you are espoused to Christ whom the angels serve, sun and moon stand in wonder at His glory*. This reflection is a reminder that our offering should be such that we are transformed into Christ.

For Consecrated Virgin, Karen Hund from Erie, Pennsylvania, she personally found the combination of reflections from Archbishop Burke and the witness of consecrated virgins most life giving. For Karen she lives out her vocation working for the Cathedral parish in Erie, PA.. Karen said: "Upon hearing how they [each consecrated virgin] lives out their vocation in the concrete ways in their daily lives, it reminded me that I have a Bishop that is awesome and that is so supportive. It also reminded me that some consecrated virgins have it really hard." Karen appreciated the opportunity to hear the different ways the vocation of consecrated virginity is lived out in the world and in the Church. She commented how ever the vocation is lived out, there are unique and common challenges and joys! For herself, she sees the suffering and joy filled side of Church. Since the conference, Karen has questioned, how could we be more supportive to each other.

The time of sharing particularly focused upon Canon 604: As consecrated virgins you have been entirely given over to Christ and the Church...you are an apostle in the Church and in the world.

Shalina Stilley, consecrated virgin, spoke during the conference that "to live out consecrated virginity, it is to be completely empty for Christ." She continued, "The Lord wants us to pray for those around us. Where we go is where Jesus is taking us."

*Grateful thanks to  
Aliceanne Sawyer,  
USACV Secretary for labors in  
compiling a memorable  
DVD/CD of photos  
from the convocation.*

*We express gratitude to  
Louise Pare for her work in  
coordinating the conference!*

Linda Frickey celebrated her one year anniversary of her consecration on the closing day of the convocation. When asked what continues to stand out from the convocation Linda said: "for me one of the biggest things that continues to encourage me is how the vocation is alive and thriving within our world, especially in light of our culture. How young people are responding to this vocation." Through the participants at the convocation we are able to see the unique vocation lived through different stages and ways with virgins living out the vocation with joy. Linda continued, "You see consecrated virgins still working hard at learning of the vocation. You can see they are not becoming complacent in their vocation. It was a joy to see where everybody is and how God continues to work. We are so different, yet still the same, united with Jesus, as our spouse." Linda spoke of the confidence she has in our union by prayer and heart, around our spouse.

To conclude by quoting Diane's article once more, "each consecrated virgin when she is faithful to God's grace becomes as it were a splendid jewel adorning the Church." Please God, keep us ever faithful, as you have chosen to set us apart for the Church, for the salvation of souls, Please unite us ever more to your heart so that we may imitate you in all things.

**2007 USACV Convocation Recordings available on tape or CDs!**

**Please see attached order form or visit our web site:**

**[www.consecratedvirgins.org](http://www.consecratedvirgins.org)**

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***Loose my tongue, O Lord,***

that I might sing to you a song of praise  
that finds its counterpoint and harmony among  
the choirs of heaven..

There is a melody

that weaves its measures through my nights  
and days,

running like a current of pure praise

beneath the surface of my cares and cautions,

finding voice in those glad moments when you  
pass by,

pressing in on me with your fierce beauty

and unbridling all my constraints and reserva-  
tions.

O may I learn to freely sing this song for you  
through all eternity.

February 20, 1998

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***“Be prepared, for you know not the day, nor the hour”***

*By Florence Sundberg*

Our beloved sister in Christ, Giovanna Gabbi of the Reggio-Emilia region in Italy, was killed suddenly and instantly as a result of a tragic accident last month. Some of us remember Giovanna from her lively presence during the Rome 1995 International Pilgrimage to Rome. Those who knew Giovanna spoke of their profound grief in losing her, but also of the great joy and zest for life they experienced in Giovanna, of her devoted service to the Church and to the people of God.

In his funeral homily, Auxiliary Bishop Lorenzo Ghizzon spoke of Giovanna having lived her life to the fullest, profoundly rooted in the Word of God, in her many ways of service to others as a French teacher, a leader of prayer groups, with a license in Theology, a member of Catholic Action.

His Excellency, Bishop Ghizzon spoke of the need for all of us to be prepared, vigilant, remaining always in the grace of God, at one's post, faithful to the mission entrusted to each one by God, in readiness for the final call.

Bishop Ghizzon spoke about the consecrated virgin, bound directly to her Bishop, being a sign the Lord gives us that we should, with Christ, seek the things that are above, and not the things of the world. The consecrated virgin, in a particular way, witnesses to this final destiny that stands before all in the Church: the encounter with the Spouse, the fulfillment of our desire to love and to be loved infinitely. She lives, therefore, all the days of her life as if it were the last day before her nuptials with the Lord, loved and desired above all things, beyond any other bond, any other love.

The prayer of the consecrated virgin, he goes on, is the profound prayer of the Word of God, participation in the Eucharist, service to their poorest brethren and is at the same time their daily nourishment, their way of extending and sacrificing themselves daily as a 'grain of wheat falls to the earth and dies' which was the Gospel read at Giovanna's consecration and which was read again at her funeral Mass.

This is the way Giovanna lived, inspired by Gospel values. She was a prudent virgin and when her Spouse arrived suddenly, we believe that Giovanna had enough oil in her lamp. When her Spouse came to bring her home into the bridal chamber prepared for her for all eternity,

